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ABSTRACT

This guide was prepared to help elementary and secondary social studies teachers use the 1984 elections as a tool to teach about American government and politics. The goal is to help students use their town, country, or city as their classroom and to use newspapers, community resources, campaign materials and activities, and the broadcast media as their texts. Background information, discussion questions, topics to research, and learning activities are provided to show students how to draw a political profile of their community, how to register and vote, how to understand political parties, how to follow a campaign, how to see through images and distortions, how to rate the candidates, how to make election day meaningful, and how to understand the Electoral College. Sources of information are annotated. (RM)

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HOW TO DO IT

SERIES 3, NO. 1

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How to Teach the 1984 Elections

by Marlene Cohn

League of Women Voters Education Fund

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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- How to Understand the Electoral College
- How to Show that Each Vote Counts
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INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters Education Fund has prepared this guide to help teachers use the 1984 elections as a tool to teach about American government and politics. The goal is to help you use your town, county or city as your classroom, and to use newspapers, community resources, campaign materials and activities, and the broadcast media as your texts. The guide will show you how to:

- ☐ help students see that election day is only one part of a continuous political process;
- ☐ help them identify and understand the reasons why some people get involved in the political process and others drop out or are left out;
- ☐ give them skills to analyze the campaigns and the candidates;
- ☐ motivate students who are turning 18 to register and vote.

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HOW TO DRAW A POLITICAL PROFILE OF YOUR COMMUNITY

People participate in politics only if they believe that it will make a difference. Students will gain a better understanding of how politics affects almost every aspect of life in their community if they know the facts about the place where they live. A discussion about how community characteristics influence the electoral process—who votes, how campaigns are run, who gets elected—will enable students to draw a political profile of their community.

What to Look For

- ☐ Local census data: population, age, income, education level, extent of home ownership, kinds of employment, major racial and/or ethnic groups.
- ☐ Economic base: major employers, unemployment level, types of agriculture and/or manufacturing, major businesses, retail centers, urban decay and/or redevelopment, housing assets and needs.
- ☐ Community service: educational institutions, hospitals, libraries, social welfare agencies, services for youth and elderly, private charities (i.e., Red Cross, church-sponsored charities).
- ☐ Governments: We all live under the jurisdiction of many governments, from the federal government to the local parks commission, and not all of them are obvious. Check the phonebook.
- ☐ Public officials: Who represents the citizen in all those governments? Are they elected or appointed? List their party, (where applicable) and length of office. What can you find out about their duties and salaries?
- ☐ How are decisions made?: Who wields the power in your community? What is the role of elected officials? Are the important decisions made in public or in private? What opportunities exist for public participation?
- ☐ Who are the opinion makers? Who is listened to in your community? Is it the Chamber of Commerce or union leaders? A member of the clergy or a college president? What is the role of the press—columnists, editorial writers—and the broadcast media?
- ☐ Who provides political information—how and where to vote, whom to vote for and why? How do citizens find out where candidates stand on issues? What is the role of community groups, political parties, interest groups such as unions and business groups? Do the press, radio and TV bring this kind of information to the public? Do election officials bring information and registration opportunities to a wide segment of the population? What part of the electorate is reached and what part left out? Is the information partisan or nonpartisan?
- ☐ The electorate: who votes and who doesn't vote? What are the community's registration and voting patterns? Are there significant differences in participation among various groups of citizens (by race, ethnic group, sex, age or neighborhood)? Do young people vote? Are there many absentee voters? What is the voting status of college students? How many Democrats, Republicans, independents or minor party members are there? Has the proportion been changing? Is there a different pattern in a presidential election year?

Where to Find the Facts

Contact election officials, civic organizations, unions, political groups and parties, community centers, and trade associations. Check your local library—many have special sections on community government and history. Visit your local newspaper and radio station and talk to the reporters who cover local news and to editorial writers.

Check with the local League of Women Voters. Most Leagues publish a Know Your Community handbook that includes many of the facts you are looking for. Go to less official sources of information, too. Talk to someone who has lived in your community for a long time, a past office holder or a defeated candidate. Seek out neighborhood leaders. They know the community well.

HOW TO REGISTER AND VOTE

Registration is the gateway to the electoral process. In every state except North Dakota, you must be registered in order to vote. Getting registered has not always been easy. The barriers are coming down, however; many of the administrative obstacles that once existed have been removed, and the federal Voting Rights Act has helped to open the gates for millions of minority citizens. But problems still exist. Once citizens are registered, most *do* vote. But often information about how, where and when to vote is hard to find, and inconvenient polling places and hours discourage voters. The Constitution of the United States grants all citizens 18 and over the right to vote, but each state may determine its own election laws. (Check the Fifteenth, Nineteenth and Twenty-sixth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution for limits on states' power). Registration and election procedures vary widely from state to state. Research on local registration and election procedures can help prepare those soon to be 18 for their upcoming registration and for casting that all-important first vote. Beyond this, an action-minded high school class can help to improve access to registration and voting if students understand the problems and needs. Use the checklist below to help students in their research.

Federal Law Governing Registration and Voting

- ☐ What federal laws apply specifically to voting for president and vice-president?
- ☐ What rights do overseas residents have to vote in U.S. elections by absentee ballot?
- ☐ Is your state covered by the special provisions of the Voting Rights Act? What special requirements does this coverage entail?
- ☐ What provisions of the Voting Rights Act apply to all states?

State Laws Governing Registration and Voting

- ☐ What are the residency requirements for registration and voting?
- ☐ Is registration by mail permitted? By application or postcard? Is notarization required?
- ☐ Is there a deadline for registering? How far in advance of election day?
- ☐ Are voters removed from registration lists for nonvoting? How often? How are they notified?
- ☐ Does state law allow deputy registrars?
- ☐ Are there requirements for a full-time registrar in each city or county? Must the registrar's office be open during certain hours—any evenings or weekends?
- ☐ Who is eligible to vote in primary elections?
- ☐ How are delegates to the national party nominating conventions chosen?
- ☐ Who may vote absentee? Is notarization required? A doctor's certificate? Can application be made by mail?

- ☐ Are there training requirements for deputy registrars and election workers?
- ☐ Who administers elections in your state? What responsibilities do they have for the selection, training and supervision of local election officials?
- ☐ What appeals can be made by persons who have complaints about the process?

Local Management of Registration and Voting

- ☐ Who manages elections in your city or county? How are they chosen? Are the major parties represented? How about women and minorities? What are their powers and responsibilities?
- ☐ Do election officials in your community reach out to citizens to encourage registration and voting? Do they deputize citizens to help them? Are there registration opportunities on evenings and weekends in places where citizens gather, such as shopping centers and high schools?
- ☐ Is there adequate information available about registration and voting? Who supplies it?

Registration and Voting Data

- ☐ What percentage of the voting age population (18+) is registered to vote?
- ☐ Which groups or neighborhoods are underrepresented among registered voters?
- ☐ What percentage of those registered voted in the last election? In the last presidential election?
- ☐ What percentage of students in your high school who are over 18 (or will be 18 by the next election) are registered to vote? How many of them are planning to vote?

What Students Can Do

- ☐ Print and distribute the information you have gathered about registration—who can register, where, when, and how.
- ☐ Register 18-year-olds in your school (if permitted by state law).
- ☐ Organize volunteers to register shut-ins in nursing homes, hospitals and at home. Coordinate with social service agencies.
- ☐ Set up a childcare center at the polls or arrange transportation for the elderly or handicapped.
- ☐ Plan an assembly program on registration and voting—bring in election officials to explain procedures.

Percent of Voting Age Population *NOT* Registered From U.S. Census Bureau Survey Data[1]

(Percentages reported of civilian, noninstitutional population)

Presidential and Congressional Election Years	18–20	21–24	25–34	All ages
1968	55.8[2]	43.6	31.7	25.8
1972	41.9	40.5	31.6	27.7
1976	52.9	45.2	37.8	33.3
1980	55.3	47.3	38.0	33.1
Congressional Election Years				
1966	66.1[2]	55.5	38.6	29.8
1970	62.7[2]	59.2	40.6	32.6
1974	63.6	54.7	45.4	37.8
1978	65.3	54.9	44.5	37.4
1982	65.0	52.2	42.9	35.9

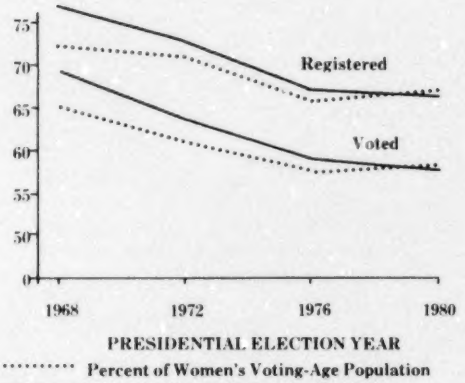
[1] The population not registered includes citizens who responded that they did not know whether they were registered or did not respond to the question. (Before 1978, the Census Bureau included non-citizens in the non-registered category.)

[2] During 1966, 1968, and 1970 persons 18–20 years old did not yet have the right to vote, with the following exceptions: the minimum voting age was 20 in Hawaii, 19 in Alaska, and 18 in Georgia and Kentucky. The footnoted figures include the percent not registered in those age categories from those states.

WHO VOTES?

Less than 60 percent of the voting age population reported that they had voted in the 1980 presidential election. In 1982, 48.5 percent of those eligible reported voting. When voting and registration rates are analyzed, it becomes apparent that certain groups are less likely to be represented in the electorate than others. Students can focus their research on one or more of these underrepresented groups. They can try to find out why individuals in the targeted category may be less likely to register and vote and what can be done about it.

Percent of Men and Women Who Reported Registering and Voting in Presidential Elections*



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
Compiled by the League of Women Voters Education Fund

* Both Census Bureau studies and other surveys of voting behavior based on interviews have found that citizens in interviews tend to "overreport" their voting or registration rates, by as much as 5–15 percent. Speculation is that norms of democracy and patriotism make some citizens uncomfortable about saying they did not vote, so they report they did. Others truly may not remember.

Women Although women's voting rates (the proportion of women who vote) historically lagged behind men's, in recent elections the rates for women have equalled those for men. In the 1980 presidential election and again in the 1982 congressional election, the proportion of women who voted was not significantly different from the proportion of men. Since women make up a majority of the voting age population, this means that women now make up a majority of those who vote.

Researchers and journalists who have been analyzing the women's vote have concluded that women tend to vote differently than men. Different issues assume prime importance for women. For example, a greater proportion of women have always been concerned about war and peace issues and tended to favor less aggressive national security policies. In the 1980's, women have been more concerned about the environment and less optimistic about the state of the economy. These differences have been characterized as the "gender gap." Combined with the greater number of women in the electorate, the "gender gap" has prompted politicians in both major parties to pay more attention to the needs and concerns of women voters.

Although women no longer trail men in voting or registration statistics, they still lag far behind men in holding political office.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Calculate the proportion of young women eligible to vote in your school who are registered, and compare with the national statistics.
- ☐ Does a gender gap exist in your class? Prepare a simple survey, asking opinions on such issues as defense spending *vs.* spending on social services; environmental protection *vs.* economic growth; inflation *vs.* unemployment.
- ☐ Talk to representatives of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the League of Women Voters, the National Women's Political Caucus, Business and Professional Women, The American Association of University Women, and other organizations committed to the rights of women. Find out about their plans to increase the registration and voting rates of women and to elect more women to public office.

Youth Young people have the lowest voting rates of all age groups. This is especially true of the newest voters, those ages 18 to 24. Since 18-year-olds were given the vote, in 1972, their voting rate, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, has been declining to 40 percent of those eligible in the 1980 presidential election and 25 percent in the 1982 off-year election. Registration rates also are low (see chart).

Since it is known that voting is an acquired habit, that those who begin voting when young continue to vote throughout their lives, it is important to start young voters on the path to becoming participating citizens.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ If registration of eligible students is a regular event in your school calendar, can your class help? If it is not, set up a school registration day. Spark interest with an assembly speaker, or a pep rally.
- ☐ If state law allows, students over 18 and teaching staff can be deputized to register students in school.
- ☐ If your state is one of the 21 with mail-in registration, send new 18-year-olds a registration application enclosed in a birthday card.
- ☐ Schedule a face-off with competing candidates for a local office.
- ☐ Consider ways to reach young voters who have left school. For example, send the message of registration and voting through youth-oriented radio and TV programs.

Minorities *Blacks:* In the 1976 presidential election, black citizens reported voting at a rate 10.5 percentage points below the national average, according to Census data. In 1980, the rate was 8.7 percentage points below the average, and in the 1982 off-year election 5.5 points. Black organizations and leaders are getting out the word that voting is power, and the number of black voters and black candidates is on the rise.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Research the rate of black voter participation in your community. Are black citizens represented among election officials in proportion to their numbers in the population? What are the facts on black office holders—number and level of office?
- ☐ Work with local chapters of such minority organizations as the NAACP, the National Urban League and the Voter Education Project (in southern states) and with local churches and community organizations to register voters and get them to the polls.

Minority languages: The voting rate for Hispanic-Americans and other minority language citizens is lower than the rate for the general population. If your community or school has significant numbers of Hispanic-Americans or other language minorities, you should be aware of the language minority provisions of the 1975 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, designed to guarantee that citizens who do not speak or read English can register and vote as effectively as English-speaking persons.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Monitor registration and voting information in your community to determine if it can be understood by language minority citizens. Is the information available in Spanish or other foreign language newspapers and radio programs? Follow up with suggestions, where appropriate.
- ☐ Work with Hispanic-American students and Spanish language classes to translate and distribute voter information materials.
- ☐ Contact such groups as the National Council of La Raza and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund. Find out if they have any registration or get-out-the-vote activities planned and how you can help.

Native Americans: Although Native Americans (American Indians) were given the vote in 1924, procedural barriers have continued to prevent many of them from voting. Geographic distance often deters participation.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Contact Native American cultural centers or tribal leaders. Ask them to speak to your class about Native American attitudes and problems concerning elections.

Institutionalized, handicapped or aged citizens Citizens in nursing homes, hospitals, mental health centers, or senior citizen centers find it difficult to get information about voting and even more difficult to register and vote. Handicapped and house-bound citizens face similar problems.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Tape voter information for the blind.
- ☐ Work with the school's print shop to provide voter information in large print.
- ☐ Demonstrate voting machines to senior citizens.
- ☐ Offer transportation to the polls.
- ☐ Distribute postcard registration forms.
- ☐ Distribute and publicize information about absentee registration and voting.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND POLITICAL PARTIES

Registration and voting are the first steps in participating in the political process. Another step is becoming involved in political party activities. Political parties recruit and nominate candidates for office, determine overall approaches to issues and work to get out the vote for their candidates.

Candidates for general election are chosen by primaries or party caucuses, depending on the state. In most states, you must be affiliated with a political party in order to vote in that party's primary (a "closed" primary). In many caucus states, political parties hold precinct caucuses—actually neighborhood meetings—open to all eligible voters who declare themselves members of the party. The precinct caucus is part of the process that adopts the state party platform, selects party officials, endorses candidates for state and national offices, and in presidential years, selects the party delegates to the national convention. Republicans, Democrats and minor parties are working to encourage greater participation, especially by women, minorities, youth, retired people and other groups not traditionally involved in party decision making. Democratic party rules require that each state's delegation to the 1984 national convention be composed of an equal number of men and women. Republican party rules require that each state try to have an equal representation of men and women on their delegations to the 1984 convention.

Political Party Quiz

Rules governing political parties vary from state to state. This quiz will help students find out about party organization in their state, and how they can affiliate or become active. Major parties usually have city and/or county offices where students may go for information. Minor parties will have fewer local offices.

1. How can people join each party?
2. Where must someone go to join?
3. Is there a special time to join?
4. May voters change their party affiliation once they have joined? How? Where? When?
5. Who represents the neighborhoods around your school, on each local party committee? Is he/she elected or appointed? When? Where? By whom?
6. What are the duties of the local party committee?
7. Does the local committee endorse candidates?
8. Who are the party's state committee members? How are they chosen? What are their duties?
9. Who are the party's national committeemen and women? How are they chosen? What are their duties?
10. Can someone who is not enrolled or registered in a party vote in the primary or caucus?
11. How, when and where are local candidates nominated? state? congressional?
12. If candidates are nominated by state convention or caucus, how, when, and where are delegates to the state convention/caucus selected?
13. How are delegates from your state (or other area) selected to attend the national convention?

HOW TO FOLLOW THE CAMPAIGN

A major political campaign, with all its excitement, activity and extensive news coverage, becomes the focus of attention during the busy few months between nomination and the general election. Even a primary campaign can generate a lot of interest, especially when there is a real contest. Teachers can take advantage of this interest to make the political campaign a laboratory for the study of the art and science of politics in America.

- ☐ Assign each student, or group of students, to track the campaign of each candidate. Don't just cover the major party candidates. To give students a sense of the many choices before the American voter, have students follow the campaigns of independent candidates, minor or new party candidates and candidates for congressional, state and local offices. Students can get information from newspapers, TV, radio and news magazines. They can collect campaign literature, promotional materials and issue statements. They can report on TV advertising, campaign apperances and debates. Suggest a visit to campaign headquarters, and an interview with the candidate or campaign staff.
- ☐ Have students monitor one evening of television during the height of the campaign and report on the frequency, length and content of campaign ads. How many talk shows present candidates? How much of TV news programing is devoted to the campaign? Which candidates are covered?
- ☐ Have the class designate the major issues of the campaign. Remember that an "issue" offers the voters a choice on something of importance—it reflects a significant public concern that can actually be addressed by the holder of the office being sought. Assign students to determine each candidate's stand on the issues they chose as important. Are there really major disagreements between opposing candidates, or are there merely differences of style or approach?
- ☐ The financing of political campaigns is regulated by federal, state and local laws. Learn about the laws in your state, and about the limits, public contributions and disclosure requirements provided by the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). Write to the Federal Election Commission (Office of Public Records, 1325 K St. NW, Washington DC 20463) to find out how to get information about:
  Who is making contributions to federal candidates.
  How much money is being spent on federal campaigns.
  What campaign funds are being used for: bumper stickers. TV time, public opinion polls, etc.

HOW TO SEE THROUGH IMAGES AND DISTORTIONS

As students monitor the campaign, they may find that they are bombarded with information about candidates, yet they may find it very difficult to pin down candidates' positions. Slogans, name recognition and personality are often all that comes through in the 30- to 90-second prepackaged messages offered on the media. Even news programing often shows us the "photo opportunity" rather than any discussion of the issues. Have students take a good, objective look at the following campaign information:

TV and Radio Commercials What did you learn about the candidate from the ad? Did you find out anything about issues or qualifications? Did the ad affect your attitude or feelings about the candidate? How important was the music, the setting, the script? Was the ad designed to appeal to a certain segment of the electorate?

Party and Candidate Materials Campaign workers try hard to distribute leaflets and pamphlets about their candidates as widely as possible. They are left on front porches, pushed under doors and distributed at transit stops and grocery stores. Read these materials carefully. Do they tell you more about the candidate's devotion to dog and family than about qualifications for office? Be on the lookout for accusations or other statements about opponents, especially so close to election day that such statements cannot be answered or denied.

Direct Mail More and more candidates are using direct mail to solicit funds or votes. Computerization has made it possible to send apparently personalized appeals to selected groups of voters. Members of women's groups, for example, may receive one message and members of veterans' organizations another. The direct mail letter may, however, help you to understand the candidate's stands on issues most important to you.

Speeches Analyze a candidate's public statements. Are the appeals and arguments aimed at your emotions or your intellect? Is the candidate trying to make you angry at the opponent or incumbent or playing on your sympathy? Focus on those parts of a candidate's presentation that will have a bearing on how and what decisions are made if that candidate achieves office.

Other tactics to be wary of:

Name Calling Beware of labels. A candidate might call an opponent "wishy-washy" or "two-faced" for positions that could just as well be described as flexible or responsive. Don't be influenced by attacks on a candidate based on family, ethnicity or other matters that will not affect performance in office.

Rumor Mongering Beware of candidates who protest too much. Statements such as "Everyone says my opponent is

a crook, but I have no personal knowledge of any wrongdoing" or "I've heard that Jones is soft on Communism" may technically be legal, but they are really dirty campaigning.

Loaded Statements Beware of statements that imply an opponent's stand such as "I oppose wasteful spending." Loaded questions such as "what did you do to prevent the bankruptcy of the Social Security system?" have the same effect.

Guilt by Association Beware of criticism of a candidate based on the candidate's supporters—"We all know Smith is backed by big money interests." Every candidate needs support from a wide range of people including groups who may not share the candidate's views on all the issues. Look at and judge the candidate's own words and deeds.

Catchwords Beware of repetitious phrases designed to trigger a knee jerk emotional reaction such as "Law and Order" or "un-American." Try to translate such words into what the candidate is *really* trying to say.

Baiting Beware of candidates who try to make their opponents look weak or lose their tempers in a face-to-face confrontation.

Passing the Blame Beware of candidates who blame the major ills of the country on their opponents. Must one person take responsibility for everything from economic problems to bad weather? Was the incumbent or the party-in-power really in a position to solve the problem?

Promising the Sky Beware of promises that no political power can fulfill. Candidates are expected to pledge that they will tackle important problems, but they should strive toward realistic goals.

Evading Real Issues Beware of the candidate who avoids answering direct questions. Watch out for candidates who offer only vague solutions or call for a study or those who talk about the benefits of proposed programs but can't be pinned down on costs or problems of implementation.

HOW TO RATE THE CANDIDATES

On the Campaign

The way that a candidate runs a campaign may provide important clues to how that candidate would perform as a public official. One would expect a contender who ran an open, straightforward, issue-oriented campaign to be an accessible, forthright, and thoughtful public official. Use the following criteria to rate campaign behavior:

Information Do campaign ads and materials provide clear information on issue positions? Can you easily obtain position papers or issue statements? Are a candidate's qualifications clearly stated, and are they relevant to the office being sought?

Accessibility Is the candidate willing to debate with opponents? Does the candidate meet regularly with the press? Does the candidate accept speaking engagements before different groups, including those who might disagree? Does the candidate go into neighborhoods or shopping centers to meet with people who might not go to political meetings?

Openness Does the candidate agree to be interviewed by the media or representatives of nonpartisan organizations, or does the candidate submit only to "friendly" questions? Will the candidate answer questions from an audience? Does the candidate give clear, unevasive answers?

Effectiveness Does the candidate (for a major office) have a well-organized staff and open headquarters? Does the candidate have an effective and enthusiastic volunteer staff? Are there few campaign staff turnovers or public disagreements? Is the campaign receiving contributions from a large variety of individual sources or a few special interests?

Fairness Is the candidate turning in required financial reports? If a campaign fairness pledge exists, did the candidate sign it? Is the campaign free of racial or ethnic slurs or innuendos? Does the candidate refrain from personal attacks on opponents?

On The Issues

Below is a sample list of major nationwide issues that you may use in evaluating candidates. You should determine how important each issue is to you and your community and give each a priority rating. Listen to what each candidate has to say about these issues and rank the candidates by how closely their opinions match yours. It is useful to use this ranking chart when listening to or watching a debate between candidates. It will help you to pay attention to issue stands and to ask questions that will clarify positions.

Your priority number	The issues	The candidate whose position is most like yours
	The economy How do we lick the dual problems of inflation and unemployment? How do we keep interest rates manageable? What about government deficits? Should we cut spending? Raise taxes? What programs should be cut; if cuts are necessary?	
	Energy What incentives for energy conservation should the government support? How much should we spend to develop new sources—solar, nuclear, etc.? Should we lower environmental standards to get more reliable and cheaper energy?	
	Environment Are we doing enough to preserve our air, water and land resources? Who should bear the costs? What is the role of public lands and parks? How do we cope with growth? How much growth do we want or need?	
	Human Needs What role should government play in eliminating poverty: Provide jobs and job-training programs? Provide income assistance through cash, food stamps and/or tax credits? Help low and moderate income people meet housing, health care and child care costs?	
	National Security Should government spend more or less on defense? What emphasis should be given to arms control? The nuclear freeze? How can we ease tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union? What should be the U.S. role in the U.N.?	
	Leadership Should public officials reflect the opinions of their constituents or try to change them through education and leadership?	

HOW TO MAKE ELECTION DAY MEANINGFUL

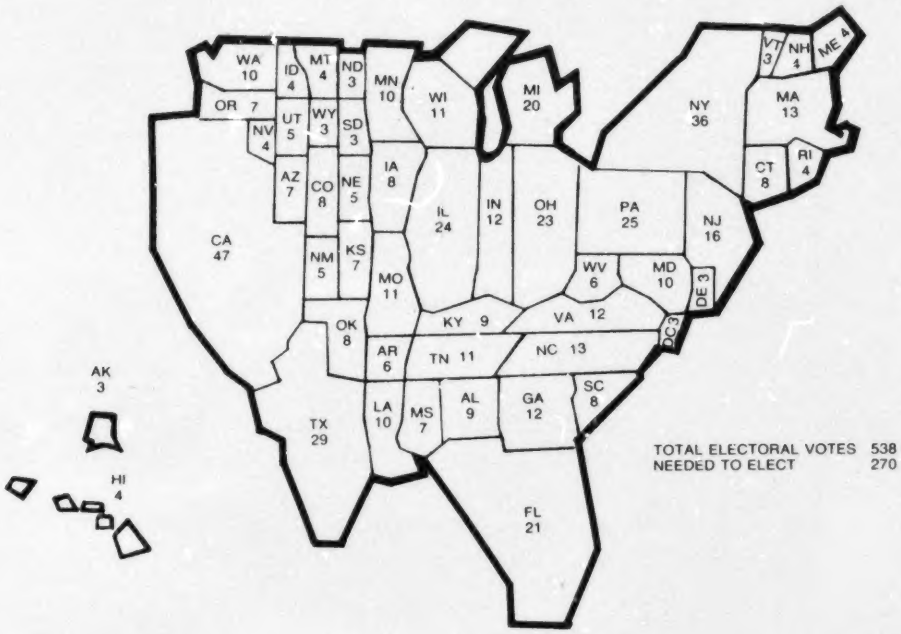
For students who are not yet eligible to vote, and even for many who are, election day can come and go as just another day—perhaps it's a day off from school or the school auditorium is being used as a polling place. Favorite TV programs are preempted for election results. With some preparation election day can be a special day. Here are some suggestions for activities.

Before Election Day

- ☐ Show how "Your Vote Makes A Difference." Take a look at close elections—in history and locally.
- ☐ Run a mock election in your school. Have students form campaign committees to support their choices, make speeches and distribute campaign literature. Put up posters and sell or distribute campaign buttons. Plan an assembly and invite local candidates or local campaign workers for national candidates to speak (make sure that your program is nonpartisan; that you offer *each* candidate for a particular office a forum if you offer it to one). Make the election process as much like the real one as possible.
- ☐ Publicize the results, and after the real election, compare them with local, state and national results.

On Election Day

- ☐ On or just before election day, organize a get-out-the-vote drive aimed at the eligible student population.
- ☐ Encourage students to help the candidate or party of their choice on election day. Students can distribute literature at the polls or door-to-door, remind citizens to vote by phone, provide rides to the polls or childcare services.
- ☐ Go to the official election results center of your county, if possible, and watch the precinct returns being tallied up. It will make you a part of the excitement of the ultimate question in elections—who wins or loses.



HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

When Americans vote in presidential general elections, they cast a ballot for a slate of presidential electors who are pledged to support the candidate the voter prefers. About six weeks after the presidential election is over, the 538 members of the electoral college meet in their respective states to perform their sole constitutional function: to elect the president and vice-president of the United States.

Electors almost always vote for the candidates for whom they have been pledged. The Constitution, however, does not bind them to do so, and in fact an independent elector is what the framers of the Constitution had in mind when they designed the college. Up to now, the vote of a faithless elector has never changed the outcome of an election, but concern about this possibility has led one-third of the states to enact laws binding electors. A presidential or vice-presidential candidate must receive a majority of the electoral votes—at least 270—to be elected. If no candidate receives an absolute majority, the House of Representatives elects the President and the Senate elects the Vice-President.

The Electoral College system has been the subject of controversy and there have been numerous attempts to change it. Amendments to the Constitution to elect the president by direct popular vote have been introduced in the Senate over 60 times, but none received the required two-thirds vote to send it to the state legislatures for ratification.

The electoral college system allows the election of a President who has not won the popular vote. In 1888, Grover Cleveland received 48.7 percent of the popular vote to Ben-

jamin Harrison's 47.9 percent, but Harrison carried New York and therefore outpolled Cleveland by 233 to 168 in the electoral college.

The number of electoral votes is not proportional to the popular vote because of the winner-take-all feature of the college's state-based system. In every state except Maine, losing candidates, whether they get two million or two votes, get no electors. That is why election results by state are so important when following a presidential election.

The number of electors for each state is determined by the number of representatives and senators allotted to that state. The District of Columbia has three electors. The number of representatives depends on population as recalculated every ten years by the Census Bureau. As the states in the North and Midwest lose population to the Sunbelt, they will have proportionately less representation in the electoral college as well as in the Congress. See the map for the number of electors from each state for the 1984 election.

Suggested activities:

- ☐ Find the basis for the electoral college in the constitution (Article I, Section 2). See also the Twelfth, Twentieth and Twenty-third Amendments.
- ☐ Discuss the pros and cons for the electoral college system. What effect does it have on minor party or independent presidential candidates?
- ☐ Use the map to follow election results. Note how electoral votes are used by the media to predict election results based on comparatively few votes actually cast.

HOW TO SHOW THAT EACH VOTE COUNTS

- ☐ In 1960, in a state assembly race in Nevada, the winner received 851 votes, the loser, 850. A third candidate received 459 votes.
- ☐ In 1962, in Newington, Connecticut, a state representative to the General Assembly was elected by one vote; the winner had 4,164, the loser, 4,163.
- ☐ In 1974, in the New Hampshire race for the U.S. Senate, Louis C. Wyman was declared the winner by 542 votes. After a recount, John A. Durkin was certified the winner by 10 votes. After a year of court battles and controversy, a special election was held. Durkin won by 27,269 votes.

HOW TO FIND SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND HELP

Organizations

Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Public Affairs Department. 1615 H St., NW, Washington, DC 20006. Business related organization.

Committee on Political Education of AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20006. Political action arm. Registration and get-out-the-vote information.

Democratic National Committee, 1625 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Joint Center for Political Studies, Publications Department, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20004. Information on black political participation.

League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF), 1730 M St., NW , Washington, DC 20036. A research and education organization that sponsors Presidential Debates.

League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), 1730 M St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. A nonpartisan political organization with members in state and local leagues across the country. Free catalog.

NAACP, 186 Remsen St., Brooklyn Heights, NY 11201. Major organization concerned with the rights of black citizens.

National Council of La Raza, 1725 Eye St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Voter programs targeted to Hispanic groups.

National Urban League, Citizen Education Department, 55 East 52nd St., New York, NY 10022. Focus on problems of minority citizens in cities.

Women's Vote Project of the Women's Roundtable, c/o National Women's Education Fund, 1410 Q St., NW, Washington, DC 20009. Information on registration projects conducted by many national women's organizations.

Republican National Committee, 310 First St., SE, Washington, DC 20003.

Southwest Voter Education Project, 201 N. St. Mary's St., San Antonio, TX 78205. Information on voter education and voter registration programs for Hispanic citizens.

Books/Pamphlets

The Almanac of American Politics 1984. US senators, representatives, their records, states and districts. Barone and Ujifusa, 1983. The National Journal, 1730 M St., NW, Washington, DC 20036, $22.50.

American Votes: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics. Vol. 15. Richard Scammon, ed. 1982. Congressional Quarterly Books, 1414 22nd St., NW, Washington DC 20037, $70.00.

Choosing the President. Step-by-step process of nominating and electing the President. 1983. LWVEF #420.

Easy Does It, A guide to registration and absentee voting laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in handy, poster form. 1984. LWVEF #522.

Getting Out the Vote, Running Registration and Voting Drives, A handbook for conducting registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns. LWVEF #424.

The Mass Media Election. The impact of the power of the mass media on presidential election campaigns. Patterson, 1980. Praeger Publishers, 521 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017.

Pick A Candidate. A citizen's how-to tool for evaluating candidates. LWVEF #259.

The Road to the White House, The politics of presidential elections. Wayne, 1983, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY.

Women and Politics; The Visible Majority, How women vote and participate in politics. Baxter and Lansing, 1983. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI.

The Women's Vote: Beyond the Nineteenth Amendment, The roots and future of the "gender gap." LWVEF #425.

The How To Do It Notebook Series 3, designed for a loose-leaf binder, provides a practical and useful source of classroom methods and techniques for elementary and secondary social studies teachers. Series is published by the National Council for the Social Studies, 3501 Newark Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016. Additional copies: 1–9 copies, $2.00 each; 10–99 copies, $1.60 each; 50–99 copies, $1.40 each; 100–499 copies, $1.20 each; 500–999 copies, $1.00 each; 1,000 or more copies, $.80 each.